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ABSTRACT

Competencies derived from experience; skills; knowledge; values; or other distinguishing qualities and motivations can contribute to a person's job performance. Counselors can use competency-based behavioral interviewing to allow a candidate to demonstrate certain skills they have used in the workplace. By using such past experiences, an employer hopes to predict future behavior, by eliminating misunderstanding and preventing personal impressions from interfering. Some personal job-related experiences are reviewed. Appendix 1 is Competency Identification. (Contains 24 references.) (JDM)

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Competency-Based Behavioral Interviewing: How to Prepare and Win!

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Understanding Competencies as Skills, Knowledge, Experience

Competency-based behavioral interviewing is used to allow a candidate to demonstrate through examples certain skills they have used in the work place. The candidate answers questions about how they have reacted to and dealt with previous work place situations. By using such past experience, an employer hopes to predict future behavior, by eliminating misunderstandings and preventing personal impressions from interfering. You will be asked to give an example of a situation or task which led you to take a certain course of action. Probing questions will then be used to determine the course of action you took, what changes were created by those actions, and the effects of those actions on others.

What is a competency?

Competencies can be derived from experience, skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, personal attributes or distinguishing qualities and motives of a person, as demonstrated through behaviors which contribute to excellence in job performance.

What is the value of the competency approach to the employer?

Companies which utilize the competency-based selection interview style usually continuously evaluate an employee's competencies. This competency assessment helps a company implement its strategy. Companies which want to maintain a competitive advantage use competencies for selection, assessment, training and development, succession planning, and supporting organizational change efforts. In all of these areas, competencies form the foundation of these efforts. The company will gain an advantage if it decides to invest in using and assessing competencies.

Competency models are developed by companies to help them set the standard for each position they fill. These competency models guide the selection and skill development of a person in an organization. "A competency model defines core competencies for all persons in a specific area. This is the minimum knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to enter and remain in the discipline and serve the needs of the firm" (London, page 171).

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What the Job-Seeker Needs to Know About Modern Business Requirements

In competency-based behavioral interviewing, the use of emotional intelligence concepts, as formulated by Daniel Goleman in his books *Emotional Intelligence* and *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, is gaining widespread use in employment interviewing.

Emotional intelligence has gained broad acceptance as a means for assessing the most critical skills and qualities required for high work performance. Goleman identifies five key areas of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills.

The research performed by David McClelland, Richard Boyatzis, Daniel Goleman, and others, indicates that IQ and technical skills have been overrated in terms of importance to success. Intelligence and technical strengths can be viewed as threshold requirements. Once a person meets the minimum requirements for IQ and technical knowledge, emotional intelligence becomes the deciding factor in career success.

Because employers are acknowledging this observation, many are looking less to college GPA and pure intellectual horsepower, and more to social and interpersonal skills.

While employers have always looked for such qualities as integrity, initiative, ingenuity, and dedication to a task, the research that Goleman has pulled together, has given hiring managers the confidence to actively seek and recruit for emotional intelligence. As a result, job seekers today should understand the concepts of emotional intelligence, and develop techniques, as well as personal anecdotes, to convince employers that they indeed possess the required emotional intelligence to be effective.

Self-Analyze

Analyze yourself to determine your strongest competencies, and your weakest.
For a list of the 67 competencies considered important in today's business environment, see *For Your Improvement,* by Michael Lombardo and Robert Eichinger. This a coaching guide to competency-based improvement among employees. Each person can learn more about personal growth potential by reading this book. Also recommended are the three exercises in the appendix to this article.

Maintaining Your Achievements Records

Constantly collect and maintain records of your achievements which prove your competencies. "Bio Data" is the human resources phrase of choice today, but it only means paragraphs which describe achievements. We recommend that you regularly write down as many of your lifetime achievements as you can remember, perhaps keeping a journal for this purpose. These can be events from any aspect of your life--work, school, community, home and hobbies, community activities, volunteer work, charitable good works, church group activity, and so on. You can annotate these paragraphs with details as to when, where, who witnessed your contribution, what outcome you caused to happen. It is important to assemble these "stories"-- as they are sometimes called--as they happen, or soon afterwards. Then the memory is fresh, and you can

recall most of the details. It is also important to arrange to have documented proof of the achievement [letters of commendation, reports, diplomas and certificates, photos, and news media stories]. Assemble and organize these artifacts of your good works in a portfolio collection, with a front-end annotated index referencing each item. These collected evidence items should be the basis for your analysis in a careful, honest manner of your skills, your knowledge, and your experience.

Build a Chart of Paragraphs about your Achievements that Match a Specific Position's Competency Model

After you perform a skills analysis, knowledge analysis, and experience analysis on yourself, you are ready to enjoy the prospect of a successful competency-based behavioral interview. Get a copy of the competency model for the kind of position for which you are applying. This data can be obtained from the professional society which supports your profession or career field. For example, the professional organization in accounting provides its members with competency models for careers in accounting. Set up a chart, listing the required competencies on the left side, and for each competency, select your best achievement paragraph which you can document that matches that competency. This gives you a powerful tool for the interview. We call this tool a "Power Chart." Use it as a talking paper, in order to present yourself effectively in the competency-based behavioral interview.

Appendix—Competency Indentification

Exercise 1. Team Work Exercise in a Workshop Setting

Team up with a partner in the room here. We will be using examples of events in your life.

I am handing you a list of more than 60 competencies for your use in this exercise.

One of the partners now reads out loud [soft voice] one example of an event in your life to your partner. The other partner listens.

Then the two of you discuss the event, and name the competencies the event demonstrates.

Write these down on your individual work sheet. These are your competencies to start with, and many more will be identified as we progress today.

Now switch tasks between partners, so that the first "listening partner" reads an example, and the other partner listens. Discuss the event, identify competencies that are evident. Write these down on your work sheet.

Now do this for all life events for both partners.

Exercise 2. Competency Tally, Competency Ranking
Now work as individuals and count how many times you have identified **the same_competency** in multiple events in your life. Add up and rank the most-used competencies, in descending order of frequency on your tally sheet.

Exercise 3. Ranking Your Enjoyment of Each Competency
Now work quickly to rank your competencies a second time, according to how much you enjoy using each of your competencies.

Put all the highly frequent, most enjoyed competencies on your work sheet.

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